



Nepperhan Community Center's *Empower You* Youth Program New Rochelle High School, Spring 2016 Pilot Study Findings

The Program

The Nepperhan Community Center received a five-year grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Administration for Children and Families to implement the *Empower You* Youth Program in six cities and high schools across Westchester County, including Tuckahoe, White Plains, Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, Yonkers, and Greenburgh. As part of the program, youth take part in a 4-week course (24 total hours) that focuses on financial literacy, job readiness, and creating/maintaining healthy relationships. This summary includes a brief description of the evaluation activities conducted to assess the pilot *Empower You* program at New Rochelle High School (NRHS) and presents preliminary findings for the program implemented during the spring of 2016.

Evaluation Activities

The evaluation includes a random control trial (RCT) design, whereby registered youth were randomly assigned to either the participating (or “treatment”) group or the non-participating (or “control”) group in order to provide a rigorous examination of the impact of the program. In total, 23 youth registered for the program. Of these, 12 were randomly assigned to the treatment group and another 11 to the control group. Youth in the treatment group took part in the instructional classes two days a week afterschool for two hours each class, while youth in the control group did not. However, both groups were invited to complete both pre- and post-surveys regarding topics covered during the course. Specifically, Metis administered the high school youth program survey to all 23 participants at the onset of the program in April (as a pretest) and again at the conclusion of the six-week program in June (as a posttest). Metis also conducted other evaluation activities including an on-site observation of instructional activities on May 24, 2016; and collected and analyzed program attendance data. Findings from these data sources are described in the following sections. It should be noted that findings are presented for those youth who are in the treatment group unless otherwise noted.

Findings

Provided below are high-level findings from data gathered through the high school youth program survey, on-site observation of instructional activities; and program attendance data.

Program Attendance Data. Program attendance data was calculated for participating youth. Of the 12 youth randomly assigned to the treatment group, 10 attended at least one class. Of these, six

completed the required coursework and received .25 credit toward graduation from NRHS, with five youth attending at least 80% of the sessions and one attending at least 60% of the sessions. The student that attended 60% of the classes completed other course requirements in order to obtain the course credit. The four remaining youth attended less than 50% of the sessions and therefore did not complete the required coursework to obtain credit¹.

High School Youth Program Survey. To measure the impact of the course on participants’ improved perceptions in healthy relationship and increased knowledge of career readiness and financial literacy, data from the completed surveys of both treatment and control groups were analyzed. In total, 21 youths completed the pre-survey and 13 youths returned to complete the post-survey at the end of the 6-week course.

Impact on Key Indicators

A total of 12 treatment youths and 9 control youths completed the pre-survey. Seven treatment youths and 6 control youths complete the post-survey. For each set of scaled questions around job-readiness, healthy relationships, and financial literacy, an individual youth’s ratings were totaled to generate a composite total score. In addition, items on the Financial Literacy Content Assessment were scored, and correct responses were totaled to yield a composite score.

At baseline (pretest), the control group tended to present higher means as compared to the treatment group, however, there were no statistically significant differences between the groups at baseline. The treatment group showed increased scores from baseline to posttest on all four scales and the content assessment. This contrasts with the control group’s narrower score increases on two measures, and score *decreases* on the remaining three measures. At the posttest, the treatment group showed greater gains as compared to the control group on all measures, except for the Financial Literacy Content Assessment. Posttest scores were further analyzed using Independent Sample *t*-Tests and results showed that the treatment group statistically outperformed the control group on two of the measures, the College and Career Readiness Scale and Financial Literacy Scale.

Table 1. Changes in Student Scores from Pretest to Posttest: Group Comparisons

Survey Scale or Subtest	Group	N (Number of Surveyed Participants)	Mean Pre- and Posttest Scores		Mean Differences: Within Group Growth from Pre- to Posttest	Interaction Effect: Mean Difference of between Group Growth
			Pretest	Posttest		
College and Career Readiness Scale	Treatment	12	104.83	153.57	48.74	36.30*
	Control	9	109.89	122.33	12.44	
Financial Literacy Scale	Treatment	12	65.42	81.86	16.44	22.33*
	Control	9	71.56	65.67	-5.89	
Financial Literacy	Treatment	12	6.58	7.14	0.56	-0.39

¹In total, 12 sessions were offered through the program, on the following dates: April 19, 20; May 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, 25, 31; and June 1, 2016.

Survey Scale or Subtest	Group	N (Number of Surveyed Participants)	Mean Pre- and Posttest Scores		Mean Differences: Within Group Growth from Pre- to Posttest	Interaction Effect: Mean Difference of between Group Growth
			Pretest	Posttest		
Content Assessment	Control	9	7.22	8.17	0.95	
Relationships Scale	Treatment	12	95.00	105.14	10.14	18.03
	Control	9	97.89	90.00	-7.89	
Preventing Violence Scale	Treatment	12	66.42	68.29	1.87	6.93
	Control	9	65.89	60.83	-5.06	

* Difference in means were found to be statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

Other survey data

On the pre-survey, the youth were asked how they learned about the program. Respondents indicated learning about the program through a letter sent home or a call home (11), from a teacher (5), the school principal (3), or friends (2).

When asked about their expectations of the program, youth shared that they hoped to learn about college and other careers, how to manage time and money, and how to prepare for the future. In the words of one youth, *“I really want to get help on feeling a sense of security and knowledge on what I want to do after high school. I want to learn to be confident in my future decisions.”*

Participating/treatment group youth were asked how much they learned from the program on a scale from 1=*nothing* to 8=*a great amount*. Table 1 presents mean scores for each question. The very high mean ratings by respondents reveals that participating youth believed they learned a great amount about: the theme of the program (7.83), preparing and seeking jobs (7.83), career interests (8.0), managing their financial life (7.67) and creating and maintaining healthy relationships (7.67).

Table 1: How Much Did you Learn from this Program (N=7)?

Area	Mean (1=nothing; 8=a great amount)
The theme that this club focused on	7.83
Preparing for and seek jobs	7.83
Your occupational or career interests	8.00
Managing your financial life	7.67
Creating and maintaining healthy relationships	7.67

When asked if they would recommend the program, all six youth who responded said “yes.” Reasons included:

- *Because it can help with financial issues such as taxes and helps build a sense of responsibility*
- *So they can [learn to] make good decisions*
- *It can help to teach financial skills that could greatly help them*

- *It tells about how your future should be and what you're going to need for it. It's definitely information that you're going to need to know for your future.*

On-Site Observation. A site visit was conducted by the evaluator on May 24, 2106 to observe instructional activities. The visit focused on the implementation of the program including the focus of instruction, what the instructor does and says, and how participants respond to the instructor/instructional activities. Student behavior including engagement and demonstration of critical thinking skills were also noted.

During this visit, six youth were present: three females and three males. Students were grouped all together and the instruction covered the subjects (topics) of healthy relationships (connect with kids lesson: justice/fairness) and college/career readiness (career exploration presentation). Materials utilized during the session included printed materials, laptops and a Smartboard.

Healthy relationships instruction included:

- Whole class discussion
- Review of vocabulary covered during lesson
- Review of lesson summary and discussion questions
- Follow-up/probing questions to student feedback
- Material presented on Smartboard for students to follow
- Instructor sharing her experience to supplement lesson topic
- Expectation of student participation in lesson

College/career readiness instruction included:

- Students grouped in pairs to work on "Career Visions" presentation
- Instructor providing one-on-one support
- Students conducting research on Internet and organized thoughts for presentation

Overall, youth were very engaged and seemingly comfortable offering responses and asking questions. Youth appeared motivated, and eager to participate in instructional activities and work together. Youth were also seen as providing thorough and complete answers and multiple creative perspectives and alternative explanations.